Brooke Blair

Aaron Burr vs. Alexander Hamilton: A Duel at Dawn

Summary of the Duel: On July 11, 1804, Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr met on the dueling grounds at Weehawken, New Jersey, to fight the final skirmish of a long-lived political and personal battle. When the duel was over, Hamilton would be mortally wounded, and Burr would be wanted for murder**.**

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The animosity between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr had roots in their past that included the following:

* The two men were rival political leaders in New York, Burr the Republican and Hamilton the Federalist
* Hamilton had prevented Burr from possibly becoming president in the disputed Election of 1800
* Hamilton had maneuvered to deny Burr the governorship of New York in 1804
* The feud became intensely personal with an exchange of insults; Burr dredged up a long-forgotten sexual indiscretion of Hamilton's while Hamilton reacted by publicly attacking Burr's character.

Burr issued a challenge for a duel after learning of Hamilton's disparaging remarks. Hamilton was personally opposed to dueling, especially since the recent death of his son in such a confrontation.  
Nevertheless, early on the morning of July 11, 1804, the two men crossed the Hudson River and met on the heights near Weehawken, New Jersey. The two exchanged pistol shots; Hamilton was hit in the stomach with the bullet lodging in his spine. He lingered for 30 hours, eventually dying and left behind his wife, seven children and a host of debts.  
Hamilton supporters have argued that he purposely fired into the air; Burr followers on the other hand maintain that Hamilton simply missed his target.  
Burr was still vice president at the time of the duel, but clearly his political career was finished. Hamilton's aristocratic views had precluded his becoming a popular figure, but news of his death deeply shocked the nation.

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**​​My Decision regarding who was most ruined by the duel: *Aaron Burr.***

**While Hamilton was shot, and eventually died, he died with honor and admiration. Hamilton's family and supporters played up his image of respectability and insisted he died having not backed down from the duel, instead taking it like a man and fighting Burr to the death. They claim he purposely missing his shot in the intent to leave Burr unharmed. America remembered him for all he had accomplished and greatly mourned his death. A grand funeral was held in his honor, in which hundreds turned out to mourn his death, this included some of New York's most prominent and wealthy and several hundred ordinary citizens. Instead of blaming Hamilton for what had happened that fateful day, the public turned to Burr with anger and resentment for killing (if accidently) such an influential American leader.**

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| Aaron Burr |

**Burr however was not so lucky, after the duel, Jefferson dropped him from his second term ticket and he lost the NY governor's race the following April. He was briefly indicted for murder, but never prosecuted. Even so, his political career was over. Cries of "Murderer" followed him everywhere he went in the North. He had lost the respect of many Americans and his character and actions both during, and after the duel were frequently judged and picked apart by fellow politicians and newspapers. By some, he was even known as the Benedict Arnold of his day. He eventually retreated to the Louisiana Territory and attempted to build an army of supporters, of which he would be in charge, and use to take over the port of New Orleans. His plan was to start is own little Western kingdom from which he could launch attacks on Spanish Texas, and Florida. He even tried to recruit England to send soldiers and money to help support and fund his project to break away from the U.S. After years of plotting and a small, failed attempt to overtake the city, he was finally captured and quickly tried for treason.**